

## March 2020 Sightings Report

It was a quiet start to spring. It was a mild month, with little snow and only one wind event on the 20<sup>th</sup> that produced only a bit of isolated damage. Temperatures averaged 40.1 °F, 5.8° above normal, while precipitation totaled 1.64", 0.86" below normal. Snowfall at 4.1" was 12.2" below normal. Fifteen days reached to above 50°, tying the 10<sup>th</sup> most for the month, and the month also tied the 11<sup>th</sup> warmest on record. Snow fell on only 4 days, and the maximum snowfall was 3.3" on the 6<sup>th</sup>. There was at least some precipitation on over half the days, but overall it was a good month for birding.

The month produced a mixed bag for arrivals with some early and a few that might make it in March missed. Species for the month and year to date were both a bit above their 10-year averages. The ~45,900 lines of reports in eBird were up nearly 50 % from last year in March. This may be significantly due to the start of NY Breeding Bird Atlas III, with many observers excited to get started, maybe a bit prematurely in many cases. Again, some of the increase in species noted is due to consistent and complete reporting of all species daily by the official Braddock Bay hawk counter, David Brown and those helping there.

Among the waterfowl, again all really expected species were reported. Snow Geese jumped in number at the start of the month and were present in high numbers both in our region and nearby through about mid-month. The rarer but now regular geese, Ross's, Greater White-fronted, and Cackling, were found in good numbers, and an early Brant was seen off and on for much of the month west of Rochester. Male Eurasian Wigeons appeared at 5-7 sites, depending on how one lumps locations. The region's 7<sup>th</sup> Tufted Duck, a male, was seen and photographed on Conesus Lake on a few dates through the month. Otherwise, peak counts for most species were modest and low for many of the diving ducks. Most of the peaks were from the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area (NMWMA); Braddock Bay numbers were down this year. By month's end, many of the waterfowl were showing signs of being well past peak numbers and moving on in migration. Grebes were generally poor, though there was a good Red-necked Grebe count at Hamlin Beach on the 26<sup>th</sup>. It is hard to put that in perspective with the biggest counts in that time period in the past, as those often involved totals over longer stretches of the west lakeshore. Sandhill Cranes numbers passing the hawk watch as well as from other sites were very good this month.

Good numbers of Killdeer were noted passing the hawk watch, and by month's end Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and Greater Yellowlegs were added. The first spring Bonaparte's Gull was seen on March 17, and Little Gull was seen at 3 locations. The 3 usual winter gulls, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous, continued

to be reported through the month. There was one intriguing hybrid, possibly a Herring x Great Black-backed Gull found on Irondequoit Bay on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

The spring loon movement was slow until Andy Guthrie tallied 236 Red-throated Loons passing Hamlin Beach on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Double-crested Cormorant numbers increased, Great Blue Herons were back at some of the nesting colonies, and Great Egret arrived. A nice surprise was two very early American White Pelicans in the NMWMA and then seen nearby for some time. The hawk count was off to a good start, with 11,734 by month's end, nearly tripling last spring's March total. Arrival dates were typical, but numbers were up for nearly all species, most double or more. Other than species typically seen in lower numbers, only Red-shouldered Hawk did not increase and Rough-legged Hawk was lower, reflecting the species' scarcity here this winter. Two Black Vultures were tallied. At 9,959, Turkey Vultures more than tripled last year's count and accounted for most of this year's total increase, with the species' share of the total nearly 85%. A table with all the details and daily notes can be found on the Hawk Count website at [http://hawkcount.org/month\\_summary.php?site=353](http://hawkcount.org/month_summary.php?site=353).

Only a single Snowy Owl was reported. The DEC Short-eared Owl surveys out of the Avon office continued, with fair numbers for this month's counts. Jim Adams reported the usual Owl Woods counts, adding 20 more Northern Saw-whet Owls to bring the spring count to 23. Only one Long-eared Owl was found there, with another heard in one of the likely local breeding areas. About 7 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were noted by month's end, with locations making it hard to separate continuing wintering birds from possible spring migrants. Almost all the Red-headed Woodpecker reports were from Durand-Eastman Park. The 3 regular falcons were all reported in good numbers at the hawk watch and elsewhere.

Passerine arrivals were pretty typical of a warm March. There were no record early arrivals, and in a number of cases, birds lingering through this winter made distinguishing new arrivals difficult. The table of noteworthy records to be posted on the RBA website will provide more details and illustrations. As noted earlier, the start of working on NY BBA III makes it hard to put numbers of records (lines in the eBird download in perspective). There were few really large counts, that fact again made hard to assess by people reporting numbers from shorter count times and smaller areas, generally a good thing in terms of possible research efforts. There was only a lone report of Pine Siskin for winter finches. Spring movement was certainly evident, and new reports followed immediately on into April.

Please send your reports by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

	2020	2019	10-year Average (2010-2019)
Species for March	147	146	140.8
New for the year	24	21	17.6
Total for the year to date	153	156	150.9

*Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee*

**Observers:** Jim Adams, Janet Akin, Diane Baillargeon, Ted Barnett, Jessie Barry, Mitchell Barry, Jordan Bartlett, Doug Beattie, Janice Beglinger, Steven Benedict, Linda Clark Benedict, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, Shawn Billerman, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Lynn Braband, Joe Brin, David Brown (official BB hawk counter), Mark Brown, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Larry Chen, Robert Cicotta, Kelly Close, Jeremy Collison, Andrew Consler, David Crowe, Lydia Culbert, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Willie D’Anna, Gregg Dashnau, Pete Debes, Bob Dodson, Deborah Dohne, Crystal Doyle, Mark Druziak, Diane Eagan, Daena Ford, George Ford, Mark Fitzsimmons, Jim Fry, Kyle Gage, Andy Garland, Janis George, Jessica George, Candy Giles, Bill & Linda Gillette, Christopher Goetz, James Goetz, John, Karla, & Shannon Gordinier, Mary Gordon, Sheryl Gracewski, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith, Bill Gruenbaum, Ralph & Georgia Guenther, Michael Gullo, Carmen Gumina, Andrew Guthrie, Chris Guthrie, Danny Guthrie, Richard Guthrie, Robert Haggett, Helen & Chris Haller, Julie Hart, Kim Hartquist, Jim & Allison Healy,

Christina Hoh, Debi Holt, Jennalee Holzschuh, Dick Horsey, Bill & Mari Howe, Carolyn Jacobs, Alyssa Johnson, Nichlas Kachala, Laura Kammermeier, Kenneth Kemphues, David Kennedy, Tom Kerr, Jim Kimball, Kathy Kirsch, Renee Kittleman, J. Gary Kohlenberg, Elijah Kruger, Mike Laird, Chris Lajewski, Tom Lathrop, Greg Lawrence, Tim Lenz, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Shyla Luna, Peggy Mabb, Melissa Mance-Coniglio, Susan March, Cindy Marino, Pat Martin, Lauri Mattle, Kenneth McCarthy, Jacob McCartney, Kevin McGann, Jay McGowan, Bob McGuire, Chita McKinney, Ann McMican, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Adrielle Mitchell, Ann Mitchell, Celeste Morien, Brian & Brooke Morse, Sheila Mumpton, Leah Mould, Rivka Noll, David Odell, Bill O’Neill, Annie O’Reilly, Joe Ovsiovitch, Michael Palermo, Gary Palmer, Andrea Patterson, Shelley Patterson, Norma Platt, Jo Popma, Jay Powell, Nick Pusateri, Doug Rabjohns, Carolyn Ragan, RBA Field Trips, Neal Reilly, Rosemary Reilly, Susan Roberts, Dave Robertson, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Kevin Rybczynski, Jackie Salisbury, Livia Santana, Michael Scheibel, Karl Schmidt, Shirley Shaw, Judy Slein, Roger Smith, Tom & Pat Smith, Robert & Susan Spahn, Dave Spier, Donna Mason-Spier, Chris Stanger, Brent Stephenson, Rick Stevens, Allan Strong, David Strong, Kimberly Sucy, David Tetlow, Mike & Joann Tetlow, Eunice Thein, M. J. Thomas, Sarah Toner, Sasha Torman, Geoff Twardokus, Nathan Ukens, John & Bonnie VanDerMeid, Jeanne & Tom Verhulst, Matt Voelker, JulesWagner, Mike Wasilco, Ann Watson, Bridget Watts, Emilee Weir, Dave Wheeler, Kinsley Whittum, Joe Wing, Paul Wolter, Chris Wood, Jim Wood, Martha Zettel.

*(Editor’s Corner, continued)*

the May and early June event calendar fills up more than 2 pages. Also this year, there is no May talk and speaker to write about, and the traditional announcement for the RBA’s June picnic is missing. Furthermore, with no field trips in April, there are no field trip reports. This issue is about half the length of a typical May issue.

In spite of these omissions, some of the traditional features of the *Little Gull* are still present. We have a membership report with, surprisingly to me, 8 new members. There is still a president’s column and still a sightings report for March, which saw the beginning of the outbreak in our area. Surprisingly, the sightings for March don’t seem to be much affected by the outbreak, and eBird reports for March were actually up nearly 50% from the previous year. This suggests that birders are actually doing more birding than usual during the outbreak and not necessarily staying close to home or birding solo.

In place of the event calendar, there is a special announcement about the cancellations and precautions to take while birding during the outbreak. Jeanne Verhulst, our program chair and vice-president, has replaced the usual meeting announcement with an article about free lectures from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Academy. These might also take the place of the RBA’s Birding 101 class that had been planned for May.

In the March 2018 issue I published an article that listed and discussed bird cams available on the Internet (pp. 4-5). These could also help to fill the meeting gap and the birding gap if you prefer to truly shelter at home, rather than venturing out to bird. In case you no longer have this issue, it is available to members online at <https://tinyurl.com/Live-Bird-Cams>.

Getting print copies of the *Little Gull* is also somewhat problematical because of the outbreak. Our usual printer, Xerox Printing Services at the University of Rochester Medical Center, seems to be operating with reduced personnel or reduced hours, or both. Also, pick-up procedures have changed because of the outbreak. Last month, they were not answering the phone or responding to phone messages, so John Boettcher and I thought they were closed. John went the extra mile for the RBA, as he so often does, by going to Staples to get the copies printed and pick them up. In so doing, he risked exposure to the virus. Since there was no meeting of the RBA Circulation Committee because of the virus, John and his wife, Norma Platt, folded and mailed the print copies. This month, we will hopefully get the *Little Gull* printed by our usual printer at a lower cost than Staples. Again, there will be no meeting of the circulation committee, but Sheryl Gracewski and her husband, Tom Nash, will do the mailing. At this time, there are only about 50 print copies. The vast majority of members get the *Little Gull* by e-mail.